

BILL: HB0767

BILL TITLE: Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 22-21

BILL SPONSOR: Montgomery County Delegation

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 767

We wish to express our support for HB 767 which would authorize the Montgomery County Council to use a ranked-choice voting method or an approval voting method for elections for certain local offices.

We are business people, who live and work in Maryland, united in our concern about the ever deepening political divisions plaguing our communities. As Democrats, Republicans, and independents, we are Americans first, dedicated to supporting non-partisan structural reforms aimed at making our democracy work better.

Our current system of plurality voting isn't working. It fuels the toxicity we see in our elections, a discord that is undermining our democracy and civil society. As voters, because of plurality voting, we often feel our vote is wasted or that we must engage in strategic voting so as to avoid unintentionally benefitting the candidate we like least. And, under our current system, we are dismayed that our elected leaders often secure only a minority of support which both undermines their mandate and fails to reward them for their cooperative and bipartisan work.

The options this legislation allows would enable Montgomery County to adopt an election system that has been found to:

- encourage civility in elections,
- empower voters to fully use their vote so as to elect leaders with a true mandate of majority support,
- incentivize elected leaders to be consensus builders, and
- broaden the diversity of elected candidates.

We applaud the Montgomery County Delegation for undertaking this reform effort. The reform enabled by HB 767 is one essential step our community can take to be part of the solution in strengthening our democracy.

We ask that the Ways and Means Committee find this bill favorable.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Simon, former CEO of Bronfman Rothschild,

author of *Contract to Unite America, Ten Reforms to Reclaim our Republic*

Robert K. Tanenbaum, Principal, Lerner Enterprises

Robert Giaimo, co-founder and CEO of Silver Diner

Robert Goldstein, President, Maryland Sound International Holding Co LLC

Maxine Davis Phillips, Vice President, International Business Development, Phillips Foods, Inc.

Meredith Callanan, Arnold MD

Julia Nickles Bryan, Baltimore MD